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DE RUEHAN #0701/01 2781424

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

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FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2905

INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEWMFC/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000701

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E-MBEYZEROV

USAU FOR JMAYBURY

PARIS FOR WBAIN AND RKANEDA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL MA

SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: TGV DIMS HOPE OF CRISIS RESOLUTION ON
EVE OF ICG-M

Classified By: P/E CHIEF DOVIE HOLLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

¶1. (C) Summary: On the eve of the third ICG-M hosted by the AU in Antananarivo, de facto transition leader Rajoelina failed to make good on his promises to replace his prime minister with a consensus candidate. Instead, he demanded on national television that the international community make several guarantees before he will take action to implement the transition charter signed in Maputo August 9. The French, who continue quietly to back TGV, reportedly favor early elections (before the end of the year) to resolve the crisis, even if they are of dubious quality, due to pressure from French residents of Madagascar to protect their interests. If TGV continues his waffling leadership, however, SADC mediator Chissano told Ambassador Phil Carter that he risks being removed by the military -- an eventuality perhaps almost welcomed by the beleaguered mediator frustrated by Rajoelina's ability to act on his words. The AU and SADC are considering sanctions (travel bans and freezing assets) against the leaders of the illegal transition authority, which Carter said the USG would support. However, such maneuvers will have real teeth only if France is also on board. TGV then convoked the entire international community today to give a softer version of his address to the nation, stressing his commitment to Maputo without demanding outright guarantees. All in all, Tuesday's ICG-M meeting already is off to a shaky start, with hopes dimmed for any easy or early breakthrough. End summary.

Rajoelina Tries to Blackmail International Community

¶2. (C) Late on the evening of October 4 -- two days prior to the third international contact group meeting on Madagascar (ICG-M) hosted by the AU -- de facto transition leader Andry "TGV" Rajoelina delivered a televised address to the nation (starting two hours late) in which he once again proved that he lacks the authority to govern Madagascar. Submitting to apparent pressure from hard-liners in his political movement -- and notwithstanding multiple promises to the ICG and others that he would replace his prime minister with a consensus candidate -- he once again failed to follow through on his word. He announced instead that he would only implement the Maputo agreements (which he signed himself August 9) if the international community provided a guaranty in writing that it would suspend sanctions, support elections, and restore over USD 600 million of suspended aid.

If such guaranty were provided, he said, he would replace Monja with a consensus prime minister suggested by the other political movements.

. . . And Then Asks for Its Support

¶3. (C) Rajoelina then convoked the diplomatic corps and visiting ICG-M participants to the presidential palace in the afternoon of Oct 5 to restate his position, albeit with nuances. He stressed the difficulty of deciding to implement Maputo and solicited the continuing support of the international community "for the people of Madagascar." He appealed to the diplomats to support him by hinting that if they did not, the military may take action -- "guns do not talk with their mouths," he said. He did not demand or even mention any written guarantees, but reiterated his desire for the nation's next leader to have been elected before the 50th anniversary of Malagasy independence next June 26. By prior agreement, there was no substantive response to his remarks from the assembled diplomats. When invited to cocktails following the address, the American and Chinese Ambassadors promptly departed. The Chinese Ambassador noted on the way out that they had suspended all of their projects in Madagascar due to the lack of leadership in the government and that they shared the US position that Maputo should be implemented without delay.

TGV Flouts Agreements Reached in Maputo

¶4. (C) Ambassador Phillip Carter met early on October 5 with SADC lead mediator Chissano. Chissano recounted that during the second round of negotiations in Maputo in August, three of the four delegations (notably not including that of ousted President Ravalomanana, whose overarching goal is taking out TGV) had agreed that TGV could retain the presidency if he agreed to give former President Zafy's movement the vice presidency and allow Ratsiraka to nominate a consensus prime minister. During TGV's meetings in Paris (Sept 26-30),

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Ratsiraka proposed three names to TGV, but he refused them all and Ratsiraka to date has failed to produce alternatives.

Chissano clarified that the French would like to see TGV retain his post and opined that they appear more concerned about the urgency of elections than their quality. Secretary-General Claude Gueant of the Elysee explained to Chissano that the French presidency is under pressure from private French and Franco-Malagasy interests in Madagascar to act more quickly and decisively to protect their interests and resolve the situation.

Ravalomanana Left out in the Cold

¶5. (C) In Paris, Ratsiraka and TGV did agree on a partition of the 28 ministerial posts envisioned by the Maputo transition charter, with five going to each of the four movements and the remaining 8 going to TGV to allocate tactically to people outside his own movement. TGV requested that the French participate in this meeting to provide him support; they joined the discussion following a two-hour tete-a-tete between Ratsiraka and TGV. In South Africa on October 3, Chissano discussed the agreement that was reached by the latter two with Ravalomanana, who rejected it. Chissano said that Zafy, who has not held political power in over a decade, is flexible because he only stands to gain; thus, he accepted the proposal when Chissano presented it to him Oct 4. After Ambassador Carter pointed out in the Oct 4 meeting of local ICG members that a consensus agreement must also take Ravalomanana into account, Chissano explained privately that the mediators' plan was to get the Rajoelina, Ratsiraka, and Zafy movements to come to agreement and then to push Ravalomanana to go along with the "majority" coalition. Chissano believed that Ravalomanana would, in fact, acquiesce. Given the opportunity to name five ministers if the others reached agreement on the top posts, Ravalomanana is already demanding the foreign minister slot. Ravalomanana also said he is eager to protect his business interests in Madagascar from further looting.

Where Do We Go From Here?

¶6. (C) Chissano explained privately that he sees two options

for the future -- the optimistic one being the implementation of the Maputo accords (consensus government, constitutional referendum, elections in 2010). However, discussing a second possible outcome, Chissano said he thought TGV might be removed in a counter-coup. He joked that might actually be preferable to have a coup so at least the mediators would know with whom to talk. Chissano of SADC and Ouedraogo of the AU both expressed their organizations' likely implementation of sanctions (travel bans and asset freezing) on the HAT leaders if they fail to implement Maputo.

Ambassador Carter noted USG support for the idea of additional sanctions, but for such a system to be effective, said that the EU must also be on board. Unfortunately, France, as evinced by comments made on several occasions in reaction to the possibility of AU sanctions, likely will oppose such moves.

Comment

¶7. (C) Although the international community at large supports the SADC-led mediation process and is calling with one (public) voice for the implementation of the Maputo transition charter (even the usually apolitical Chinese Ambassador called for respecting Maputo during their recent national day), continuing French double-dealing makes them a wild card. They cannot afford for Madagascar to turn into a failed state or descend into violence, and they would prefer to retain a Francophile (evidently even a feckless one) at the helm. Their mixed signals to TGV may have emboldened special interests and hard-liners around him to push him to equivocate again in the face of pressure of the rest of the international community to form a consensus government. TGV now is trying, clumsily, to use one speech with his people and another with the donors on whom they depend. Tomorrow's ICG-M is likely to feature some spirited sparring between the French -- perhaps arguing alone -- and those like us who will want to see a firm international community position going forward.

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